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Bug Buildup

Acts 2:1-21; 2 Timothy 1:6-7

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BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE

The search for energy is a history of humankind. Energy is so important to human survival that myths were written to explain how we came to have it (Prometheus and fire). To have energy is to have power and control, evidenced in part by our long-term policies in the Middle East. And that's why we're always interested in alternative sources of energy - biomass, geothermal, nuclear, hydroelectric, solar, or even the methane gas produced by cow manure. I am told that the cow pies dropped globally in the pastures of the world produce millions of metric tons of methane gas, but to date no efficient method of passing gas from cows to our homes and automobiles appears to be in sight, so it seems to be a 'moooot' point.

But there has been some real success with wind farms, miles upon miles of large wind turbines installed on farmland where there is a strong and steady breeze. The rotor blades of these turbines spin in the wind and generate electricity for homes, businesses and utilities, and do so in an incredibly clean and efficient manner without disturbing the agricultural use of the land around them.

I am told the potential of these turbines is staggering - wind energy may be able to supply about 20% of the nation's electricity, and this energy is everywhere. Of course, there are still a few bugs to work out. Literally. Workers at these wind farms have long noticed that electricity-generating wind turbines are plagued by strange and unexpected fluctuations in their power output. Eventually they figured it out - smooshed bugs. Insects had been accumulating on the propellers of the turbines, adding aerodynamic drag and siphoning off up to a quarter of the energy production.

We may have the same kind of problem with the church. Pentecost recalls the mighty wind power of the Holy Spirit, a power from God that wants to electrify the church. The power of the Holy Spirit is what the disciples were waiting for - Jesus had told them to hang out until they were clothed with power. The church had its marching orders from Jesus - the Great Commission, to go into the world and make disciples of everyone - but before it got started on that, the church was told to wait until the power source arrived.

When the Spirit arrived, the disciples were given an ability they didn't have on their own, to speak in other languages. But the ability to speak in other languages wasn't the point - the point was to use this ability to proclaim the gospel to everyone who was present. The point of the gift was to get the good news of Jesus Christ out to everyone who was there. The point was to bypass the language barrier so that everybody could hear the this grace-filled Word from God.

What's more, the Spirit inspired Peter to stand before a hostile crowd and preach with newfound courage and conviction. And the result (the point) was 3,000 people who responded by professing trust and faith in Jesus as Lord. Wind-generated church growth.

Pentecost is about the Holy Spirit giving Christ-followers the gifts, courage and conviction to be an energy-filled congregation.

But like the large turbines on wind farms today, we American Christians of the 21st century don't always make good and efficient use of this holy power. We don't move smoothly when we feel the breath of God. We have some local bug buildup.

Look, you can use an old, manual push vacuum cleaner to do the rugs in your home. It will get the surface mostly cleaned. You can use an old drill in home repair, the kind that uses your physical strength to get the hole drilled. But why use a drill from generations past when we can use a power drill? The power drill makes a fast, clean hole. The modern vacuum cleaner goes deeper, is faster, and requires fewer passes.

Our houses and church structures have built-in electricity - we have outlets every 20 feet or so. Why ignore the outlets? This is what Paul is saying to Timothy in the second reading - fan into flame the gift of God, don't ignore it. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the power tools that God has given us to handle the work God has given us. We are exhorted in Acts 2 and in 2 Timothy 1 to use the gifts we have been given, and we are told that IF we use these God-given gifts, then we will not suffer with a lame spirit of timidity, but we will be blessed with a spirit of power, and spirit of love, and a spirit of self-discipline.

And we need power and love and self-discipline if we are to carry on the task of bringing glory to Jesus Christ. We have recently declared that our mission at this church is to know and love Jesus Christ, to be his hands in reaching others, and to joyfully proclaim and celebrate his love and grace. This is who we have agreed to be, this is what we have agreed to do. To be successful, we need to get the bugs off the turbine propellers; to be successful, we need to embrace the tools that God has graciously given us in His Holy Spirit. And we need to begin to do it today.

BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE

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